

IMAGINING GOD INCLUSIVELY

To begin the task of imagining God inclusively, I can implement in my own thought-patterns the biblical insight that "God is spirit" -- not by degrading body and elevating but rather by emphasizing the universal dimensions of the "spiritual body" of God-in-Christ. John 4:24 gives assistance in that direction, telling me that "God is spirit; and those who worship [God] must worship in spirit and in truth." This statement offers the worship-experience to everybody because no one is cut off from access to spirit, to that which is intangible yet so real that we call the absence of it death and the presence of it life. Prison walls cannot cut a person off from spirit, nor can color, or poverty, or lack of education. It is true, of course, that tyrannical societies seek to break the spirit in order to render an individual thoughtlessly obedient. But it is significant that God takes special care of people whose spirits have been broken: "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick" (Ezekiel 34:16).

It is the cumulative effect of female experience which warns me against using "God is spirit" in the traditional way of setting up a hierarchy, with spirit superior to body. For centuries, females have been associated with the body and its passions, while males have associated themselves with the mind and spirit, with reason. And the concomitant value-judgement has been, of course, that Reason (good) must control Passion (evil). From there it has been only a tiny step to the association of females with the demonic and males with the deity. I think that enough has been written on this subject in recent years that I need not labor the point.

Most Christians are aware that biblical injunctions about living "in the spirit" rather than "in the flesh" are not aimed at defaturation of the physical body, but rather are used to distinguish between locating one's ultimate identity in the private, localized ego-consciousness ("the flesh") as opposed to locating one's ultimate identity within the universal "spiritual body" shared with all created beings and amounting to more than the sum of its parts (the Body of Christ, "the spirit").

There is nothing bad about the physical body and nothing bad about the localized ego-consciousness, although from the biblical standpoint there is something temporary about both. The body that will be resurrected will apparently be qualitatively different, a "spiritual body", according to I Corinthians 15:44; but the fact that body is slated for resurrection says something about

the goodness of body. And the consciousness which knows as it is known (I Corinthians 12:12) is also qualitatively different from the severely limited temporal consciousness. It is only when my human ego absolutizes itself and the physical body it resides in that I am thrown into a state of alienation from God (the Wholeness of Being and Becoming) and hence from all other creatures. Inevitably at such times, I fear the death of my physical body and want my own advancement more than anybody else's.

In the New Creation, there is no exclusion of anybody on any basis whatsoever. According to Galatians 3:27-28, we all become one person, one body inside one garment (the Christ). For centuries, of course, the representatives of the church have been speaking of the Messiah, the Christ, as God incarnated, spirit embodied, Word enfleshed, divinity humanized, humankind divinized. But not many have taken the next logical step of recognizing that if that is true, then it makes perfect sense to imagine the Christ as female, black, Indian, Oriental, poor Appalachian white, or indeed as any form created beings can take. (I think of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem addressed to Christ, who for him broke forth from the sight of a falcon riding on the wind -- "The Windhover: To Christ our Lord.").

The Christ is in no created form exclusively, but in all such forms inclusively ("in him all things hold together," Colossians 1:17). For in the New Creation, "there is one body and one spirit...who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). This kind of imagining, based squarely upon an inclusive reading of Scripture supports social justice because it makes available to every human being the empowerment of identifying herself or himself with the divine. It also provides the best possible basis for restraint and respect in the use of natural resources.

Second, I can learn to think of the word God as the designation of an office or role (the whole Structure and Process of Reality) rather than as a masculine word denoting a physical masculine person like Jove on Mount Olympus. The problem of imagining exclusively a Goddess or Great Mother is that it tends to fragment the same way that literalistic imagining of God as exclusively Father has done. Worse yet, because of centuries of patriarchal condescension toward women, feminizing a word immediately tends to trivi-

In Unity is privileged to be the first to print this excerpt from Dr. Mollenkott's book, *Speech, Silence, Action!* to be published in 1980 by Abingdon.

Dr. Virginia Mollenkott



alize it. Apart from a small contingent of feminist theologians, people feel that the role of deity is split and trivialized by feminizing the word used to designate it. The feminist theologians who prefer to speak only of the Goddess will, of course object that is exactly their point: the human consciousness must learn to recognize the female as equally as divine as the male. That point I must fully agree with; but I doubt that designating the office of deity as Goddess is the way to go about it. Let us make some analogies to illustrate what I mean.

The moment one speaks of a chairwoman, because of social conditioning the imagination pictures garden clubs and theater parties. The word chairperson was invented to allow both males and females to imagine themselves in such leadership roles. But in actual practice chairperson has not been used when men chaired (they remained chairmen) but only when women were chairing. The end result was not an advance for women, but a wipe-out of our bodily nature, our femaleness. Chairperson has therefore only made matters worse.. The solution would be either to use the neutral word chair as a noun as well as a verb, or to view the word chairman as a designation of office or role rather than as sexually differentiated. In this case I think the word chair is clearly the more satisfactory solution, since it focuses on work to be done (chairing) without designating the sex of the doer.

Alma Graham wrote several years ago about the "language of equal opportunity," arguing that women are invariably trivialized when jobs are labelled as if work varied according to the sex of the worker. When I came across Graham's article, I recalled that

Katharine Hepburn, who has a powerful self-concept, has always referred to herself as an actor, not as an actress: she is "one who acts on the stage or screen." By analogy, a woman who writes books is an author, not an authoress; a woman who executes a will is an executor, not an executrix; a woman who is elected to the highest post in her government is a President, not (God forbid!) a Presidentrix or a Presidentress. Similarly, jobs should properly be named by the work performed, irrespective of the sex of the performer. So I should train myself to think of an insurance agent rather than an insurance man, a telephone line repairer rather than a lineman, an oil deliverer rather than an oilman, a mail carrier rather than a mailman, a member of Congress rather than a congressman. Such language makes it possible for any human being to make imaginative identification with any job and thus be empowered to seek it.

If, then, society learns to think about the word God not as the name of a specific person (analogous to Jove) but rather as a job description or the designation of an office --the only office that contains no limitations whatsoever, and certainly not the limitation of human sexuality --then we will have opened up that concept to every human being. The fact that the Bible uses the word God for the One Deity and the same word for pagan idols (uncapitalized) seems to indicate that the word is to be thought of as designating an office (Supreme Being) rather than a proper name. And

the fact that both male and female are made in God's image and designated as God's agents (Genesis 1:26-27) ought to help demolish the notion that the term God is sex-defining (or confined).

In this connection, I am reminded of my reaction when first I read the anonymous medieval work called *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Having been reared on strictly propositional Christianity, I was astounded to be told in Privy Counselling, "When you go apart to be alone for prayer . . . reject all thoughts, be they good or be they evil. See that nothing remains in your conscious mind save a naked intent stretching out towards God. Leave it stripped of every particular idea about God . . ." (p. 149). I realized, with a jolt, that even my ideas about God are part of my ego-consciousness, part of the knowledge which will vanish away, part of my private judgment-system which must be relinquished if I am to enjoy real communion with the divine.

I read on. My fourteenth-century mentor, whoever she or he may be, counselled me that "I want your thought of self to be as naked and simple as your thought of God, so that you may be spiritually united to him without any fragmentation and scattering of your mind. He is your being and in him, you are what you are, not only because he is the cause and being of all that exists, but because he is your cause and the deep center of your being. Therefore...think of yourself and him in the same way: that is, with the simple awareness that he is as he is, and that you are as you are. In this way your thought will not be fragmented or scattered, but unified in him who is all" (p. 150). I feel no doubt that were that medieval mystic living today, those masculine pronouns concerning God would instantly be either expanded or deleted. Clearly the author thinks of God as the designation of an all-inclusive Presence beyond any human comprehension, let alone any human limitation. As I encountered these great insights, I realized how very grateful I felt to the Women's Movement for forcing me out of the mold of thinking of God as somehow definable according to human categories. And for that reason, a switch to Goddess-language is for me only a return to a mind-forged manacle, not liberation at all.

But I do consider it essential to bear witness to my belief that the word God designates an office and not a male being. To do this I must consistently use inclusive pronouns or a least avoid male pronouns. I prefer to repeat the term God rather than to use a limiting and therefore misleading masculine or feminine or neuter pronoun. This gets especially sticky when I need to use a reflexive construction. I could try James W. White's solution ("God gave Godself"), which is certainly better than "God gave himself." Or I could say "God gave herself/himself/itself" as an awkward but insistent way of driving home the absolute inclusiveness of the Godhead.

The thesis of *The Cloud of Unknowing* is that as long as I am living within the limitations of morality, God will remain surrounded by a cloud of unknowing that I can in no way penetrate cognitively, but only by love. This realization is, the author assures me, truly liberating: "For in the realm of the spirit heaven is as near up as it is down, behind as before, to left or to right. The access to heaven is through desire . . . We need not strain our spirit in all directions to reach heaven, for we dwell there already through love and desire" (p. 127). Although we twentieth-century people may flatter ourselves that through the scientific world-view we have liberated ourselves from naive understandings of the universe and of a God-out-there, this fourteenth-century person understood plenty! And she or he would probably feel sorry for us as we flounder around struggling with God-language in almost primitive naivete about the nature of worshiping "in spirit and in truth."

Third, I can stimulate more inclusive imagining of God by using a variety of biblically based epithets or ascriptions. In Old English poetry, word-pictures were drawn by use of compound epithets called kennings, so that the ocean might be spoken of as the "whale-path," a king as a "ring-giver," or a sword as a "fire-flasher." Use of Kenning-like epithets concerning God would serve as reminders of God's myriad roles in my life. Continual, repetitive reference to God as Mother or Father focuses attention on beginnings, on God's creatorial and parental functions only. (Even so, sometimes referring to God as Parent rather than as either Mother or Father forces me to think about what parenting is apart from sex roles: what is its essence?) But constant searching for fresh biblical metaphors would widen my awareness of what God does not only over, but also through and in the creation: Sea-walker, Light-bringer, Sin-forgiver, Star-kindler, Whirlwind-speaker, Food-supplier, Life-restorer, and so forth.

Prayers may address God simply as you, but when that feels too abrupt or my heart is overflowing with love, all sorts of phrases may grow out of scriptural usage. "you who have healing in your wings," "you who inhabit Eternity," "you who are my rock," "you who swing the stars in space," and so forth. And they may, of course, also be based on my own experience: "you who are my shield from gossip," "you who visit me on golden eyelids," "you who have provided the love of friends." Naturally, none of this denies the importance of single-word ascriptions like Redeemer, Sustainer, Friend, Comforter, or Guide.

Since all language about God is figurative and limited and probably to some degree a distortion of the One hidden within the Cloud of Unknowing, and I need constant reminders that no single phrase or word-picture can possibly be telling the whole truth about God. So the more variety, the better. Getting in a rut of a few too-narrow images tempts any person or group to forget that we do not yet know as we are known. From that kind of forgetfulness springs idolatry, the absolutizing of our own minds and their imagery.

Fourth, I can help myself imagine God more inclusively by continuing to explore the female imagery occasionally applied to God in the Old and New Testaments. Although I included many such images in *Women, Men, and the Bible* (Abingdon, 1977) and added some more in the cassette study course by the same title, once in a while I come upon new ones. For instance, it excites me that when Jesus spoke to his disciples about the future time when they would have to do without his physical presence in the world, he described his own suffering and the history of suffering humanity through a birth-metaphor: "When a woman is in travail, she has her sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world" (John 16:21, RSV). A few minutes later, John tells us Jesus began his prayer with the words, "The hour has come." Thus he identified the anguish of the cross with the pangs of giving birth, and identified himself with a woman in labor. His pain would be forgotten as soon as he had given birth to the New Humanity.

One reason this image excites me is that this very passage was part of my personal oppression. My gynecologist was a professing Christian, and when it was time for me to go into the hospital to give birth to Paul, he quoted to me what he probably still quotes to every woman as she goes into labor: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (KJV). Because he had told me that my child would be a girl, my heart wrenched when I heard the reference to a man-child. As a new contraction started, I groaned, "But what if it's a girl?" He shrugged, "Oh, I don't imagine the sex of the baby matters much to God." Nevertheless, I was triumphant.

phant when I had a boy, partly because, unconsciously, I was convinced that John 16:21 really implied that boys were better than girls. To the detriment of my self-respect, I continued to think so for many years. No wonder: not only the King James Version, but also contemporary versions like the New English Bible, the Phillips New Testament in Modern English, and the Jerusalem Bible all speak of the joy of man's birth! Yet the Greek word translated "a man" clearly means "a human being." In such ways has female presence and power in Scripture--and in the imagination of religious women--been nearly eradicated.

As biblical feminists keep coming up with new awareness of the female aspects of the Godhead, I think several cautions are in order. One of them is that I doubt the wisdom of separating off the Holy Spirit as the feminine Person of the Holy Trinity. Such separation breaks the unity of the One Godhead, as if there were really three gods in Christianity, two of them male and one of them female. Besides, such separation still leaves the female in the minority, eternally "outvoted" by a two-to-one power bloc, and therefore does very little for the female self-concept. In addition, the Bible utilizes female imagery in connection with all three Persons of the Trinity, and I believe it is best to mirror scriptural usage as much as possible. However, because we are engaged in struggling out of the shackles of patriarchy, we will want to increase the proportion of female imagery concerning the Godhead; and of course we will want to take special pains to affirm the right of all human beings to imagine God in the ways that empower them as blacks or Indians or Orientals or whatever.

My second caution is that we must not imagine that the use of feminine imagery concerning the Godhead will be enough by itself to bring about an end of sexist oppression in society or even in the church community. Unless the "feminine" roles and aspects of God are valued as highly as the "masculine" roles and aspects, our sense that "the Lord our God is one" will still be fragmented, males will still be encouraged toward primacy, women will still be diminished into secondary status, and community will still be broken. My favorite illustration of this comes from one of the sermons of the great seventeenth-century English poet and preacher, John Donne. Because he was a careful student of the Bible, Donne occasionally spoke of God in feminine terms; but he regarded God-as-Mother as distinctly more "inferior" and unquestionably "inferior" to God-as-Father. Consequently, at a wedding he felt free to speak of the woman as the man's "staff," commenting that after all, nobody values his staff as much as he does his own legs. It would be hard to imagine a more flagrant violation of the injunction in Ephesians 5 for husbands to love their wives "as their own bodies"; but Donne and his congregation were reading the Bible through sexist-colored glasses.

As long as people continue to value spirit more than body, then images of God feeding her children will be pre-empted in Christian imaginations by male priests in flowing gowns handing out bread and wine and washing the dishes afterwards upon the altar. Whereas I in no way minimize the political effects of the way human beings imagine God's appearance, I want to point out that the process can work in the other directions as well. Changes in societal structures will help our imaginations become more inclusive and empowering. When fathers share fully in parenting tasks and mothers share fully in spiritual leadership, and when single persons and gay persons are highly respected in church and society we will all be in a better position to imagine God more expansively. ■

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'We Had to Sacrifice the Woman'

Social and Sexual Forces Between Pulpit and Pew

THOMAS H. TROEGER

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's
men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

✦ THE WOMAN'S voice, a ball of buoyant sound, rolled effortlessly from the pulpit to the last pew of the chapel. Her eyes shone, and conviction animated her body so that her listeners felt a strong personal presence in the pulpit. As Katherine's teacher, I knew that she was trying to develop her own distinctive mode of preaching. In earlier classes she had revealed a great love for the black Baptist tradition in which she was raised. Yet she had also indicated that as a woman with a particular vision of ministry, she would be delivering sermons in a style different from that of the male preachers she had heard. It was a matter not of disowning her roots but of claiming the integrity of her witness.

"Like Humpty Dumpty, our society is in pieces, and it seems that all the king's men and all the king's horses, all our technology and all our knowledge, cannot put us back together again."

The class had responded enthusiastically to Katherine's first sermon, a nurturing message about using our different gifts in the body of Christ. But today's sermon was moving into more troubled waters.

I

"We are in pieces: Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, men and women, blacks and whites. Today I want to look at just one of those splits, that of blacks and whites."

The issue was a live one in the chapel where Katherine preached: the class consisted of herself, five white women, four black men, and three white men. We were always working hard to help the preacher without imposing our peculiar biases and traditions on the person. So when Katherine signaled that she was going to examine the split between blacks and whites, the atmosphere thickened with the anxiety of confrontation.

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"There is a pressure cooker in the ghetto." Katherine's hands began to move together as though she were trying to compress an invisible basketball that kept expanding. "Society keeps trying to pack it down. And although I do not usually consider myself a prophet of future events, I think it is going to blow to pieces in the '80s." Katherine's hands sprang apart as though a coiled spring were released, and we in the pews could feel the energy rushing toward us.

"And yet I believe there is a word of hope. This morning I want to speak about just one thing that we can do to heal the split between blacks and whites. . . . We can preach the gospel."

At this point the sermon became weaker—as Katherine herself later agreed—because it dealt in generalities and preachers' phrases without the bite of specific illustrations. However, as she moved into her conclusion, it became more pointed, naming issues of medical care and housing and employment—all problems that she had encountered in her summer ministries during seminary.

At the end Katherine came out of the pulpit carrying a ball of pink yarn. Saying she wanted to symbolize the hope and unity we had as Christians, she had us toss the ball of yarn among ourselves until we were all holding onto the unwound strand. Then Katherine led us in singing "Bless Be the Tie That Binds." At the end of the song we released the yarn and came forward to share in our response to the sermon, as we do in every class.

II

Susan, a white Unitarian who has been on the front lines for many social causes, responded first: "I just want to say that I loved the sermon. I know that's not a very helpful response. But I did. Maybe it's because I am white, and I need to hear from a black person that there is at least some kind of hope."

Charles, a black Baptist, told first what he liked in the sermon: "Its note of hope—I needed that." Then he shared his reservation: "I am afraid the sermon did not get deep enough into the pain in the ghetto. Maybe the hope came too easily to be real." Charles

identified precisely what was weak in the sermon, and his kind manner helped several other class members to share their responses.

But the mood of the class changed when another black student, Leon, said: "I felt the sermon was an attack on the black men in this class when you mentioned the 'sacrifice' involved in preaching the gospel. Blacks have been sacrificing for too long, and it's time for them to be grabbing their share of the pie." I pointed out that, in fairness to Katherine, she was not talking about black people in general but about preachers, black and white alike, needing to preach the social demands of the gospel even when that might not be the popular thing to do. But the vehemence of Leon's next response indicated that we were dealing less with the content of Katherine's sermon than with the rage that fueled his speech. "I am telling you, the sermon was an attack. I felt it as an attack."

Another black student, Richard, now entered the conversation—at first speaking in the same tone as Charles, critical but helpful. "I think I heard what Katherine was trying to do. She was trying to find some hope in a pretty hopeless situation, and that is a hard thing to do. We are talking about men in Buffalo whose hearts have been cut out, children in Atlanta who are disappearing. She mentioned these things, but she didn't deal enough with the existential pain in the situation." His words came haltingly, gingerly, as though he were aware that Leon's anger was hot enough to evaporate whatever anyone said.

At this point, Eleanor, a white Presbyterian, ten years older than Katherine, reached toward her with support. "I appreciated what you were trying to do in the sermon. We do need hope. But I was thinking of some blacks I worked with this summer in my own inner-city parish, and you were right about that pressure cooker. It is ready to explode. I felt that last summer, and I felt it in your hands." Eleanor imitated Katherine's gesture with the invisible basketball. "But maybe Charles is right; you made the hope come too easily to be real."

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Sacrifice

(Continued from page 108)

Eleanor, though her voice was edged with the anxiety that Leon had touched off, was trying to reintroduce Charles's more helpful tone, identifying what was good in the sermon and looking at what needed strengthening.

But Leon did not pick up on the shift in the conversation. He took off from Eleanor's criticism and lashed out, distorting what Katherine had said and missing altogether that she had spoken

to the issues of housing and medical care which he mentioned. Leon began to dominate the class. By now, his vocal quality had changed from the full-blooded anger of his earliest response to a more whining, petulant tone. It was as though he had moved from an adult's rage to a child's tantrum. The class, which had enjoyed many healthy arguments in the past, began to retreat into silence, sensing that this time conversation was no longer possible.

Richard, meanwhile, adopted Leon's angry tone. He began: "What the black

male members of this class are trying to say is . . ." I pointed out that not all the black members of the class were saying the same things. One had been silent throughout. Another, Charles, had spoken earlier but had become quiet.

III

Our time was up, and people were off to other classes and appointments, except for Katherine, who stayed behind to view the videotape of her sermon. She was devastated. She had preached a good sermon that did, as she acknowledged, need to deal more with the struggle in the ghetto. But this weakness in the message was not enough to account for the disproportionate anger of the reaction. Other students had preached similar sermons with similar weaknesses, but none had awakened this kind of ranting.

What had happened?

Something primordial had come out in the all-consuming petulance that marked the closing minutes of class. I shared with Katherine the substance of a Conant lecture that Nancy French had delivered last winter.

Women in positions of authority, said French, are apt to awaken the preverbal relationship with mother. So long as they are supportive and nurturing—as Katherine was in her first sermon—those who follow them are grateful. But if the woman authority figure challenges rather than soothes, calling for sacrifice, the listeners may respond from a child's sense of having been denied gratification. Ostensibly they will deal with what was said, but in tone and manner they will reveal that the controlling emotional reality is the relationship to mother. They will be speaking as more than isolated individuals. They will be giving expression to undercurrents of thought and feeling that are rumbling through the whole group. Hence, the class response and even Katherine's sermon revealed forces greater than the motions of their individual psyches.

When I shared this idea with Katherine, she began to recover from her devastation and to analyze some of the responses of the class. "They weren't even talking about what I said. I sensed that, but I didn't know what was going on." We then looked again at her sermon for clues. The nursery rhyme and the pink yarn stood out in bold relief. Katherine, eager to develop her own style, had drawn on symbols from the feminine world that intensified the subconscious



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response in terms of a child's relationship to mother, with its explosive ambiguities of gratification and denial. Leon and Richard had in turn reacted with the childish vocal quality and fractious ranting that went beyond their comprehensible adult anger.

Leon confirmed this analysis when I walked into the dining hall for a cup of coffee. He stood up and said: "Well, are you going to give me 15 lashes?"

"I'm not in the business of giving people lashes. Why do you think I ought to be doing that to you?"

"Because of what happened in class."

"And what was it that happened in class today?"

"Oh, a lot of things were going on."

"Yes, I think a lot of things were going on. And I think we need to talk about them."

Leon agreed. That afternoon he came by my office and we talked. This time there was no child speaking but the sharp, adult intelligence that I had come to respect in Leon. He spoke to me man to man—and I use those words deliberately. He told me about his work in a prison, how "pink yarn won't tie those bitter men together," and how hurt he had been that Katherine had not dealt adequately with the fierce pain he felt about what happens to black people in prison and on the streets of the ghetto. I told Leon that if he had spoken as directly out of his experience in class and with the same passionate but mature voice, Katherine and everyone else would have heard him. I shared with him the analysis of sexual forces I had discussed with Katherine. Leon was skeptical about it, but at the end of our conversation he came back to it on his own, even though he denied its truth.

IV

During the week I had several conversations with students and with three black colleagues, trying to understand more fully what had happened. At our next class period I brought to the lecture session our current pastor-in-residence, a superb black preacher who had the respect of the entire class. We had talked extensively about what had happened earlier, and he knew the incident would probably come up in the course of his presentation on prophetic preaching. It did. First, a white male and later Katherine raised the issue, pointing out that she had tried to take a strong stand for justice, and we all knew what had happened to her. She

wanted ideas on how to handle herself in the future.

The pastor took Katherine's question seriously, pointing out that since he was not a woman he could not speak precisely to her experience, but indicating that he had often received virulent responses that were disproportionate to the sermon that set them off. He talked about "living through the pain" of those reactions and trying to understand the deeper realities that had been hooked in his listeners. Because the pastor, a black male, had addressed Katherine's question seriously, it was now a topic open to the entire class across racial lines. I built on his re-

marks and outlined the nature of the preverbal response pattern that seemed to have been touched off in class.

When I finished, Richard nodded his head in agreement and said, "Yes, I think some of that is true, that stuff from Nancy French. I think the little boy did come out in me, and I coluded with Leon and we became a little bit like a tribe, and we had to sacrifice the woman." These words in print do not convey the tone of self-realization and genuine apology that now marked Richard's voice, nor do they describe the feeling of relief that pervaded the class as Richard's acknowledgment lifted the load of gloom.

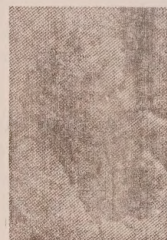
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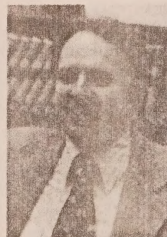
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"There was more to it than that though," continued Richard. "There was the fact that Katherine had not realized fully enough the pain we feel about what is happening in the ghetto, and there was the reaction of the entire class as Leon and I began to attack Katherine. Eleanor [the white Presbyterian woman] bonded with Katherine to give her female support in the face of the attack of us males. Others retreated into silence, following the pattern of fight-flight that we learned in Professor Ashbrook's course last year. Afraid of the way we had identified ourselves as the 'black males,' the rest of the class did not dare to come to Katherine's aid. It was wrong, but we got caught up in it, and there was no way to stop it, at least not just then."

While Richard was speaking, the entire class nodded their heads, each affirming the accuracy of Richard's remarks. His words were like an exorcism, naming the demon that had pervaded the class and thus driving it out and freeing us to understand what had happened.

V

Several weeks later, I was still talking with students and reflecting on the primordial sexual forces between pulpit and pew. I have certainly had people attack my preaching, but never have I received quite the irrational, petulant treatment that is sometimes given to women and that I observed firsthand in Katherine's case. *We had to sacrifice the woman.* I cannot get Richard's

words out of my head. They make me see why people balk at feminist theology, inclusive language and women preachers.

The resistance runs deeper than a well-reasoned theological position. It is grounded in the relationship to mother. I do not say this as someone eager to be labeled "a Freudian" or wanting to point the finger at dear old mom and blame all our ills on how we were weaned and toilet-trained. But the intensity of reaction, in women and men alike, indicates that the feminist transformation of theology will have to work at even profounder levels than language and mythology. As important as these are, they remain verbal, and the resistance is coming from preverbal experience.

Yes, language and liturgy, mythology and images must change, but when people fight these changes, it will not be adequate to argue back at a rational level. The tighter knots in the soul will have to be untangled. And that means the final locus of the transformation will be in communities of men and women who care enough about each other to stay together even when the sexual forces erupt in devastating ways. Nothing less than a commitment to the Truth who is greater than all the compacted powers of our psyches can make such a community possible. In the preaching class it was the students' common loyalty to God that by a hairbreadth kept them from giving up on one another.

The assumption of authority by women in our churches is a test of our claim that there is "neither male nor female but all are one in Christ." Is this merely theological cotton candy or the steel twine of reality? If we run from the explosive sexual forces between pew and pulpit and glibly say, "Oh sure, I accept women in the ministry—I see no problems," then we will be fooling ourselves, and we will fail to see the revelations that God is making through the feminist movement.

Seminary classes and church study groups that jump on people when they resist changes in language and metaphor instead of probing where that resistance is coming from will not establish a community where there is justice regardless of sex. But if women and men together look at the recesses of their souls, trusting in the One from whom no secrets are hid, then the light will shine, and they will grow toward "mature adulthood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." □

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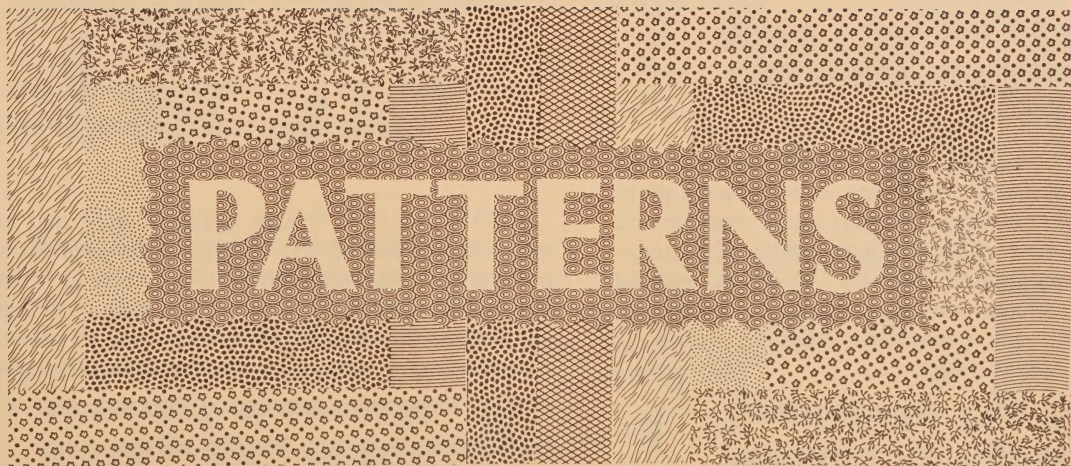
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Spring Quarter

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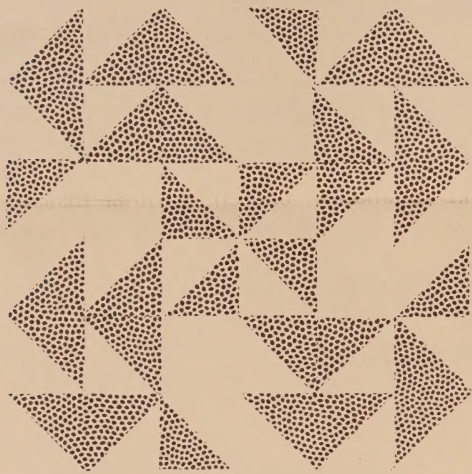


design by K.M. Irwin

1 Bibliography of Feminism

June 13, 1981 *Instructor: Beclee Newcomer Wilson*

A guided reading in women's writings. There will be a reading list of your choice and a follow-up session will be held at a later date. From *Total Woman* to *The Women's Room*—these books can be painful and confusing when read without a guide and a time to talk it over. Fee: \$30. 10am to 3pm



2 Fingerprints

April 11, 1981

Instructor: Virginia Barrett

For beginning writers and for those wishing to move from journal writing to a literary art form. Methods will be presented for starting the process of looking back without turning to salt, for the healing release of forgotten and painful/joyful memories. 10am to 3pm

3 Weight Loss Through Personal and Spiritual Growth

April 25, 1981

Instructor: Ruth Mordecai

Introduction to new concepts about fat, based in part on Susie Orbach's new book, *Fat Is A Feminist Issue* and also on the concept of fatness as an expression of our spirituality. Topics discussed: feminism, body image, sexuality, stress reduction, use of a support group. Lecture, small group discussion and exercises in stress reduction and food awareness. 10am to 3pm

4 Women As Spiritual Leaders In The New Age

May 2, 1981

Instructor: Lila Forest

A joining together for women who have dedicated themselves to service to human beings and the Spirit. A time to renew personal commitment, share our visions, discover new ways to nourish ourselves, nurture each other through massage and prayer, share ritual meal at noon. Bring food to share for lunch and your personal journal. 10am to 3pm

5 The Spiritual Journey With Theresa of Avila

May 9, 1981

Instructor: Mary E. Giles

An experiential approach to prayer using as our guide the seven mansions of Theresa's interior castle. Much time will be devoted to discussion prayer in our own lives. 10am to 3pm

6 Toward The Mother: The Experience of Descending

May 16, 1981

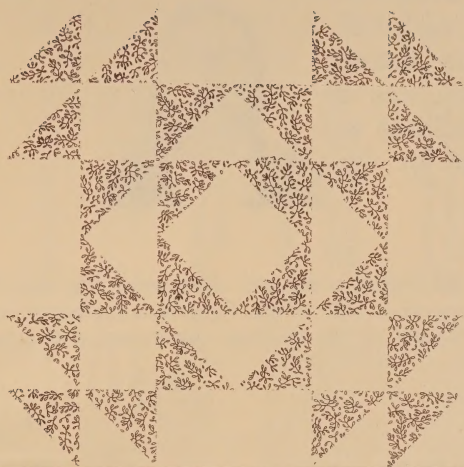
Instructor: Jeanne Borden

Exploring life underground—the realm of The Mother. Relating the experience of descent into personal lows, depression, etc. to the theological concepts of suffering and death, the psychological concepts of breakdown and shadow, the spiritual concept of the dark night of the soul. 10am to 3pm



Report to the GTU building, 2465 LeConte, Berkeley, on the date(s) scheduled.

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7 Re-Membering Your Body

May 23, 1981 **Instructor:** Sandra Winter Park
Dance as a means of spiritual growth. A variety of resources will be used to enable you to re-claim the dancer in you, to learn to use your mind to discover what your body knows. 10am to 5pm

**REGISTRATION FEE
FOR EACH COURSE: \$20**

Bibliography of Feminism: \$30

Payment must accompany registration.

8 Can We Afford Women In Prison?

May 30, 1981

Instructor: Dody Donnelly

The question of the workshop is asked in regard to the financial, political and spiritual costs of the growing number of women incarcerated today. The responses to this question, from the fields of psychology, law and theology will be explored. 10am to 3pm

9 Oral History Workshop

June 6, 1981

Instructor: Sarah Lee Sharp

A basic training in the tools and techniques of oral history, including project development, interviewing, administration and organization. Can be adapted for use in community, church or other ministry setting. \$6 materials fee requested with registration payment.

10am to 4pm



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The Spring Quarter of PATTERNS is dedicated to the memory of Catherine Scholten, who died on January 21, 1981, a few hours before her thirty-second birthday. Catherine was a PATTERNS instructor, a Ph.D. candidate at UC Berkeley and a talented editor for the Regional Oral History Office.



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Jeanne Bordeau

Ed.D., University of Massachusetts in Religious Foundation of Education; taught theology at Georgetown and humanities at the Univ. of N. Dakota; currently in private practice of spiritual direction in Berkeley.



Ruth Mordecai

Completing an MA in Spirituality at the GTU; psychiatric social worker with graduate study in social work; spiritual companion and retreat leader who has given many marriage enrichment programs.

Dody Donnelly, CSJ

Ph.D., Catholic University of America in Classics, Th.D., PSR; former Assoc. Prof. of Historical Theology at the Jesuit School of Theology; currently adjunct faculty at S.F. Theological Seminary; author of three books



Sandra Winter Park

M.Div., PSR, Graduate of the S.F. Dancers' Workshop; dance instructor whose courses include: sexuality and spirituality, creating rituals through dance, creative movement for women.



Lila Forest

M.Div., Starr King School; co-founder of Holyearth Foundation to promote the awareness of the sacredness of life; alternative freelance ministry of teaching, healing and dream work.



Sarah Lee Sharp

Ph.D., UC at San Diego; interviewer and editor, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.



Mary E. Giles

Ph.D., UC Berkeley; Prof. of Humanities and Religious Studies at Cal State University, Sacramento; lecturer on the topics of mysticism and spirituality; founding editor of the journal, *Studia Mystica*.



Beclee Newcomer Wilson

Ph. D., University of Minnesota; national officer of Church Women United; speaker, poet and author of *Woman in Bits and Pieces*, 1980.

Changing People and Nations Through Jesus

by Mottalepula Chabaku

The second major address of the EWC conference was given by Mottalepula Chabaku, a black South African Christian who has crusaded world wide for an end to apartheid. In a colorful, African style, yet uniquely herself, Ms. Chabaku told the story of her life as one who protests injustice, even though she is frequently the victim of many kinds of discrimination. She uses only the method of non-violent resistance, power in powerlessness, demonstrated by Jesus on the cross.

Excerpts from Mottalepula's address follow. These are best transcribed into free verse, a style in which she often seemed to be speaking.

I have difficulty in witnessing my faith
Because of human-made designs and
structures

That we have to have a professional
presentation

With documentary evidence
With quotations from authorities,
Only then will this sound convincing and
presentable.

And yet

From my own indigenous culture

I have to share from my heart

From my life

From my experience

And allow the Holy Spirit to work through
me

To reach out
Clumsily, but honestly.

A beautiful thing happened last night.
While I was at a table alone

A beautiful sister of mine came.

A white South African woman

From Johannesburg, my own city.

She had left my motherland

Because she couldn't stick it any longer.

She was afraid to reach me

Because she didn't know if I would re-

ceive her

As a white South African.

But when she told me she was from Jo-

hannesburg

I felt, here was flesh of my flesh

Root of my roots

And together we're so far away in this

strange land.

I touched her

I hugged her

I kissed her

Because she is flesh of my flesh.

It is my human beings who have made

pigmentation

A leprosy in our lives

Instead of a gift.

In the central government of South Africa

No black person has the right to vote

whatsoever.

No black person has the right to own land

In any city, town or industrial area.

It doesn't matter whether you are edu-

icated

Or whether you pay taxes

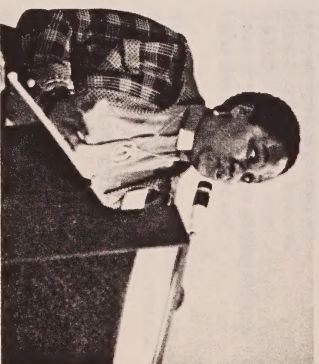
Or whether you are best-behaved

Or you're docile, senile or God-fearing

So long as you are not Caucasian

You have no vote in my motherland.

Changing People



Photograph by Dan Hamlett-Lensen

Chabaku

These laws have been passed
By an all-white government which is nine-
ty per cent Christian
In its religious affiliation.

What would you do if you were in my

shoes?

When everything is dark

Yet I believe that God loves me.

How can I say that

When I am voiceless, voiceless and land-

less

In the land of my birth?

I come from a poor family of seven chil-

dren.

I was the second eldest

My parents could only educate me up to

the sixth grade.

I am self-taught

I had to struggle all the way to where I

am

But I have never taken No for an answer

I have been taught by my family that my

name

which means "one-who-comes-with-the-

rain"

Empowers me to come with rain.

Now in our part of the world

Rain is a very scarce commodity.

We look forward to it

We pray for it

We yearn for it.

So when I was born

There was thunder and lightning and tor-

rential rain —

And then I came.

So even though I may be critical of sit-

nations

And condemn them like thunder and

lightning

I must always end up with rain.

Where there is rain, there is water

Where there is water, there is life.

So even though the earth is parched and

dry

I have a moral responsibility

To be like rain that will soften the hardest

dirt

So that something will grow out of it

(Even if it's only a weed).

Hence the importance of our names.

When I was a young adult

I rejected the Christian faith

Because of the double standards in my

country.

African women bear the worst of the op-

pression in South Africa

Generally, single men and women have it

difficult.

So for a single, black woman

It's hell.

But for a single-black woman from South

Africa

It's *quadruple* jeopardy

(If there's a word like that).

Finally God reached me.

I had tried Islam, Hare Krishna, socialism,

Marxism, everything

And I came to the faith.

Then I became involved in bringing

changes

Not only in the hearts of people

But also in structures.

One of these areas was fighting the Uni-

ted States Information Service

For having its cultural programs ex-

clusively for whites.

White South Africans could come to the

States
With all expenses paid for six months.
And we blacks didn't have that chance.
So after a lot of pressure and work
They opened the gates to all South African
cans

But they reduced the time to six weeks.
I came in the second batch
In the spring of 1976.
During that time I met a man
From the Lancaster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania
Who said they would be happy to have me come

But there were no funds.
Later, in August, I got a telegram saying
There is a one-year scholarship for you.
So I came to L.T.S. on a one-year scholarship

To take a three-year course.

When I began to look at the Christian faith

I looked at it through my own eyes
From my own experience
And then only, check out what other authorities are saying.
Because many of our authorities are male
And write from a male point of view.

Not only that

As Africans we had a tough time accepting the Bible

Because it was a white man's religion
Wrapped up in Western culture.

We had problems with the naming of God
Because in our culture

God has no shape or form
And our pronouns are not sexist.

We use one pronoun for both male and female.

Here I am as a woman.

I have put on this dark collar purposely
To reemphasize that God calls *every*

women to the ministry.

But there are women who will refuse
To call a woman minister to their church.

There are women who will refuse
To let women on their church councils and sessions.

There are women who will deny other women
To have equality in this world
When we are both male and female together.

One of the problems is that we have these male terms.
We have to call ourselves "wo-men."
(For me it means "woe-to-you-men!")
So it is from that background
That we can be part of the change
If we change our attitude.
Accept that we are God's creation and uniquely ourselves.
Our role is to be out there in the world.
We have let men out there alone
To run the business.

I am for women's liberation.
But I am not for equality with men.
That may shock some of you
But I mean it.

Let me explain.

The men of today are less than human
Less than they are meant to be.
They are oppressed by other men
Oppressed by women
Oppressed by society.
Men are not supposed to be gentle, sweet and kind.

They are not supposed to cry
Or they're labeled sissies.

A study made at Johns Hopkins hospital in Baltimore
Discovered that a very high percentage of men who suffer from cardiac stress had dry tear ducts.

All their stress was never expressed through tears.

Even in their homes, men are not free.
When a man wants to help in the home
To wash the dishes or mop the floor
He puts on an apron.
Then there's a knock on the door
And he has to remove his apron quickly!
To conform to society.
He is not fully human.
I cannot be equal to that kind of man.

I am for equal opportunities
But I do not want to be equal
To that standard of a man.
Some of you have been getting drowsy
I said this to wake you up!

There is no struggle that will be complete
Without the liberation of women, men and children.
We should never try to pay men back for our oppression.

Yes, I have suffered at the hands of men.
I have lost promotions because I was a woman.

There was an occasion
When I was supposed to be school board chairperson.

But because I was a woman
They elected a school board chairman
Who hardly knew how to write.

I have every reason to be anti-white, anti-men

But I have no right to avenge myself.
When we find out what Jesus says
We find that Jesus puts more importance on people than property.

He defied even laws and traditions.
When he was questioned about healing on the sabbath

He said, "The sabbath was made for *people*

And not people for the sabbath.
So I prefer to defy the government of South Africa

Because God's word is more important to me.

And in your country too.
I am supposed to be quiet and choose my words here.

And be grateful I have been allowed into this country.

But this is *all* God's world!

This is my home too
And if there is anything wrong
I will say it!
Everywhere!

We women must become like the women

of the Bible
Who identified with Jesus
Even to his death on the cross.
We women are more than half the world's population

We ought to be out changing the world!
So many times we think we are powerless.

But there is *power* in powerlessness.
The Jesus we profess was not powerful.
He was ridiculed and humiliated and killed.

But we have been *saved* by that "powerless" Jesus Christ.

So many times we think we are powerless
And ask what we can do.
For example, you have a vote.

I don't have a vote.
How do you use that gift God has given you?

We are *dying* to have a vote in my motherland.

And some of you become apathetic
And forget men and women who died
So you can have this vote.

The blacks may have thought they were powerless in this country.
But Jimmy Carter had to use the black vote

In order to get elected.
When the blacks ganged up in Philadelphia

They got rid of Mayor Rizzo.
Banding together in their powerlessness.

Women need to use their power to stop being exploited
Even by commercials.

There is nothing that hurts me so much
As to see women put down by your commercials

Especially married women.

A married woman is put down
As if she has no intellect, no sense.

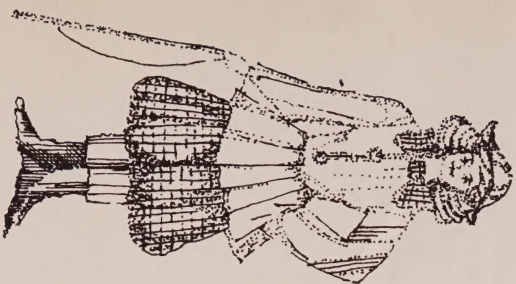
She does not know what kind of potatoes her husband likes
But the saleswoman knows it is Slove Top Stuffing.

These are some of the stupid things that go on.

9. I was a Methodist lay woman used by God in the revival of 1857-1858. As an associate evangelist of Dwight L. Moody, I am credited throughout America, with having won 25,000 souls to Christ throughout America, Canada, and England. Because of opposition to a woman in the pulpit, I wrote a book *The Promise of the Father* (1859), calling for women to proclaim Jesus Christ in public. I influenced other Christian women such as Catherine Booth and Frances Willard.

10. Raised the daughter of a wealthy Southern slaveholder, I was converted in a wave of Presbyterian revivalism. My sister and I later became Quakers and pioneers for abolition and women's rights. Because we spoke to groups of both women and men, many churches harshly censured us. A special concern of mine was for the impossible position of slave women.

Compiled by Catherine Kroeger and Reta Finger



AND
REDAILED

Changing People

(continued)

And then you have your classic "Ring Around the Collar."

What is the solution they give you? The woman must sheepishly take the husband's shirt

Put on the Wisk and put it in the laundry machine.

For me the solution is simple

The woman must say, "Wash your neck!"

And the man can take his own shirt

And put it into the machine.

It is the woman's Christian responsibility to say that.

In the name of Christ, you can do it!

I had to learn to forgive the white people in my country.

In August, just before I was coming to the States

Some white people saw me coming down the street

And threw a can of tear gas into my face.

There was no riot, no violence

It was just because I was black.

I couldn't see.

I tried to go to the eye hospital

But there was a police road block

And they refused to let me through.

EWCC Conference Statistics

Where: Saratoga Springs, New York
When: June 25-28, 1980

Registrants: 466 Men: About 50

Geographical locations: Most participants from east and west coasts, especially New England. Some from south-west, mid-west, 30-35 from Canada. Very few from the south.

Denominations represented: Largest numbers from Presbyterian, Reformed, Episcopal and Christian Reformed.

Fewer than 20 of each of these denominations attended: Anglican, Bible

Churches, Catholic, Christian, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of God,

Congregational, Evangelical Covenant, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite,

Nazarene, Plymouth Brethren, Schwenkfelder, Society of Friends.

It was a Friday
And I had to remain in that agony until

Monday

When we had to circumvent the whole place

To get into that hospital.

Some of my nerves were damaged

So I could not read.

And then I had to come to the Seminary in September.

Tears kept running down my face every day.

I said, God help me to hate what these people do

But never to hate them as people.

Today this country worships materialism
More than God, more than people.

It exploits people, it exploits the Bible

And God is getting angry.

This country feels its honor is more important

Than human lives in Iran.

It feels you cannot say sorry for any mistake you have made.

But we as Christians have a moral responsibility

To turn enemies into friends.

In an era of escalating violence

I am one of the diminishing few

Who still believes in peccetual changes.

I have been rejected by my own people
Because I still hope for miracles.

I still wish for consultation

Rather than confrontation.

I still believe in the Bible
Rather than the bullet.

I am called to give life
Rather than destroy life.

I have no property
I have no future

I am a nobody

But I have a responsibility to share my life sacrificially

As Jesus Christ shared his life for me.

Motalepula Chabaku graduated from Lamaster Theological Seminary in 1979. Since that time she has been working with the Presbyterian Church as a missionary to the United States.

Becoming Reconciled to Love's Justice

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

Let us think together about an important issue—women and the ministry of reconciliation. Our theme is drawn from II Corinthians 5:14-21. I am quoting the New English Bible but have made some minor adjustments in the direction of inclusive language. The adjustments do not change the text, except to clarify that it is addressed to women as well as men in the Christian family, and that the God spoken of transcends the human limitation of maleness or femaleness.

"One person died for all and therefore all humanity has died. Christ's purpose in dying for all was that people, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for Christ who for their sake died and was raised to life. With us therefore worldly standards have ceased to count in our estimate of any person; even if once they counted in our understanding of Christ, they do so now no longer. When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun."

"From first to last this has been the work of God. God has reconciled us human beings to God's Self through Christ, and God has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation. What I mean is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to God's Self, no longer holding humankind's misdeeds against them, and that God has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. We come therefore as Christ's ambassadors. It is as if God were appealing to you through us: in Christ's name, we implore you, be reconciled to God! Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for our sake God made Christ one with the sinfulness of humanity, so that in Christ we might be made one with the goodness of God's very Self."



Photograph by Dan Hamlett-Liesen

Mollenkott

Although Paul's primary meaning was that he and Timothy had been called to the ministry of reconciliation, responsible scholars agree that by extension this passage also describes the mission of God's people in every age. What, exactly, does the ministry of reconciliation entail for Christians who believe in human equality and therefore call ourselves biblical feminists?

Reconciliation a Thorough Change

We may imagine that ministers of reconciliation should encourage people to forget about justice in order to achieve surface tranquility. But the concept of "peace at any price" is not peace but repression, a "law and order" that shoves human suffering out of sight. The price of genuine peace in this world is the doing of justice by overturning unjust systems and empowering the poor and the oppressed.

The Greek word translated to *reconcile* in our text does not mean simply having sentimental good feelings toward one another. Instead, it carries the strong connotation of *thorough change*.

From the context we know that the thorough change to be made is the change *away* from the standards of judgment in the king-

dom of sin and death, and *into* a union with the justice and love of God in the New Creation. In order to understand some of the implications of this passage for our current lifestyles, we need only think about some of the huge divisions and hostilities in the world we inhabit. We are called to be *agents of change* from the New Order to the Old Order, attempting to bring about a thorough transformation from the hideous injustices in our world to the justice-love of a society united to Christ. Let me specify a few of the "worldly standards" of the Old Order that seem to me urgently to call for our ministry of reconciliation.

Mutuality on an International Scale

First of all, we are called to be *change-agents* in a world that is able to destroy itself many times over. The United States has, over 10,000 warheads aimed at the Soviet Union alone; yet we continue to pile up additional armaments. A thorough change in our thought patterns about *where security comes from* is necessary among us evangelicals if we are to be effective ministers of reconciliation in this area. As William Stringfellow has written, our "immense, redundant, overkill nuclear weapons arsenal" is clearly impotent. If we *do* use it, we will destroy ourselves in the process of trying to destroy our enemies; if we *don't* use it, the waste is both profligate and grotesque. Because biblical feminists value life, we must seek opportunities to emphasize that escalated military spending is done for the profit of the already-rich, and at the expense of the hungry, the illiterate, the exploited.

In this connection, we evangelicals must alert ourselves to various attempts to baptize right-wing politics as if ultra-conservatism, unrestrained capitalism, and Christianity were synonymous. *Christianity Today* recently described the activities of Christian Voice, a 130,000 member group founded by Protestant fundamentalists but willing to embrace Mormons, Roman Catholics, or anyone else who will agree with the ultra right-wing political attitudes of Christian Voice. A similar group, Moral Major-

ity, aims at a membership of two million people. Founded by Jerry Falwell, leader of the Old Time Gospel Hour that is aired on more than 300 television stations every week, Moral Majority strongly opposes the Equal Rights Amendment and views certain peace efforts as "selling out to the Soviets." It is no coincidence that the "New Far Right" almost unanimously supports nuclear power, unrestrained profit economies, the death penalty, and increased military spending, while opposing the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The first form of oppression mentioned in the Bible is sexism, when Eve is told that in the sinful worldly order, her husband will rule over her. In the very next chapter, Genesis 4, we read of the first murder; and in Genesis 10 we read of Nimrod, a mighty hunter of human beings and "the first potentate on earth." So Genesis implies that twentieth-century social analysis corroborates: a close relationship between those who advocate dominance and submission in the home and those who advocate militaristic dominance and submission in national and international affairs. Dominance is an orientation to death.

People or Profit?

The fact is that no political party line is distinctively Christian, and no economic system is distinctively Christian either. However, some systems are more people-oriented and justice-oriented than others. The best we can do in our ministry of reconciliation is apply New Order rather than Old Order standards in our prayerful and rational assessment of which organizations we ought to join or support. The world of sin and death values property and profit more than persons; so it is part of the ministry of "thorough change" to insist upon values that respect above all things, all persons made in the image of God—whether those persons are male or female, First, Second or Third World, black, white, yellow or red, handicapped or whole; or divided from ourselves in any other way that comes to mind. Thus 1:11 speaks about making money one's primary goal as a "vile motive"

(Jerusalem Bible). People, not the profit motive, must undergird our political actions.

If the standard of the Old Order is that might makes right, so some nations carry a big stick to whip the weaker into line, then the "thorough change" of reconciliation would be to stand up for the weak and powerless. If the standard of the Old Order is that the mighty nations and corporations glut themselves on profits and natural resources without a thought for those who labor and yet are hungry, and without a thought for those who will be born into a raped and depleted world, then the "thorough change" of reconciliation means that we advocate responsible stewardship of the world's resources. World hunger, caused by catering to the luxuries of the rich before the *basic needs* of the poor have been met, could thus be ended. If the standard of the Old Order is that war is a ready option among nations who disagree, then the "thorough change" of reconciliation requires that we become peacemakers in both word and deed. Reasoning mutuality, not ramrod force, is the way to deal with disagreement. It is not really surprising that evangelicals who believe in male supremacy in the home are calling for militaristic supremacy in the world order. We who have learned to live in mutuality in the home must use whatever influence we can muster in favor of mutuality on the national and international levels.

Reconciliation with Those We Don't Approve Of

According to the unspoken standards of a fallen world, it is necessary to care only for those who agree with us, or those who cooperate with us and have something to contribute that will give us a margin of profit. And if a foreign government does not bow to our economic terms and our political priorities, let its people starve!

But Christ Jesus told us to love our enemies—and Jesus never allowed for any division between loving and doing justice. In the temple Jesus announced his identity and his mission by reading from Isaiah

61:1-2: "The spirit of God is upon me, because God has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." In this way Jesus established an unbreakable connection between justice for the needy and the presence of the Holy Spirit. I have nothing against speaking in tongues or any other charismatic experience, but I am convinced from both Old and New Testaments that the central sign of the Holy Spirit's anointing is being willing to struggle for justice by bringing good news to the poor.

As long as there is one hungry person in the world, it is unjust for anyone to wallow in riches. For that reason Jesus said it would be impossible for the rich to enter the commonwealth of God. Love and justice are the complements of each other. To "love our enemies" does not mean having sentimental good feelings while we exploit for all we're worth. Loving our enemies means recognizing them precisely as enemies and yet dealing with them in loving justice anyway.

Part of our ministry of reconciliation will be working to empower the oppressed of every nation, including our own. The only way to genuinely help oppressed persons is through solidarity with them. This allows for *mutuality* as opposed to a condescending Big-Daddy kind of assistance. Paul describes this kind of mutuality in II Corinthians 8:13-15: "There is no question of relieving others at the cost of hardship to yourself; it is a question of equality. At the moment your surplus meets their need, but one day your need may be met from their surplus. The aim is equality."

Because at the deepest level every human being is made in God's image, it is not of foremost importance whether or not we approve of somebody else's actions and attitudes when they need our help. Neither as a nation nor as individuals are we appointed to police the world. Everyone made in the image of God is our neighbor, and the greater the neighbor's need, the more claim our neighbor has on our surplus—of money, energy, know-how, respectability, time, or whatever. The aim is equality.

I can illustrate on a personal level what I mean about love's justice despite disagree-

ment. Many of you are perhaps aware that a very prominent evangelist woman publicly calls the work of us biblical feminists nothing less than diabolical. What shall be our stance toward this woman and others like her? When the Apostle Paul's authoritative ministry was attacked, he countered with a very strenuous defense of his own integrity, and I think we biblical feminists do well to explain our insights and our policies. On the other hand, it is vitally important that we do not allow our own theories to stand between us and doing loving justice to our sisters and brothers, even those who disapprove of us and whose ideas we disapprove. That's what I Corinthians 13 is all about. Knowledge will pass away, but love is eternal. Our *theories* about what is right and wrong often get in the way of our *loving people*. All of us see only "through a glass darkly"; our perception of reality is inevitably defective. So it is dangerous indeed to reject something eternal, like loving and doing justice to persons. Differences of doctrine, opinion and moral judgment are all part of the knowledge that will vanish away.

Bridge-Building Through Inclusive Language

Another task in our ministry of reconciliation as biblical feminists is to be bridge-builders to feminists of other religions and of no religion. The way to build a bridge is, of course, to find some areas of agreement and to build upon those toward increasing harmony, positive change, and mutual helpfulness. For lack of space, I want to focus simply on one area where we have biblical precedent for being more cooperative than many of us have so far been. That is the area of inclusive or non-sexist language.

Most of us biblical feminists have little difficulty using the "language of equal opportunity" concerning human beings. We have learned that it is actually more precise to speak of a member of Congress rather than a Congressman, of a mail carrier rather than a mailman, of a flight attendant rather than an airline hostess. I hope we will soon drop sexual differentiations concerning other jobs, speaking of all those who wait on

tables as waiters and all those who act on stage or screen as actors, and so forth. The naming of jobs is a justice issue because linguistic differentiation contributes to lower wages for those who do the same job but have the feminine ending on the name of their job. I hope we will learn that it is relatively easy to switch into the plural to avoid sexist pronouns, as in "Will people please take their seats" instead of the sexist "Will everyone please take his seat" or the inclusive but awkward "Will everyone please take his or her seat."

But the biggest problem for us comes in the naming of God. Because of our allegiance to scriptural usage, we evangelicals have found it extremely difficult even to think about using inclusive language about God. Since the Bible uses predominantly male images of God as Father, Christ as Son, Christians as part of the Sonship, and so forth, we feel vaguely idolatrous to speak of God in any terms but masculine ones. We tell ourselves that using masculine images of God is all right for us, since we understand fully that these are only metaphors, and we know God is Spirit, and thus not limited to one sex.

Nevertheless, our feminist sisters and brothers from non-evangelical backgrounds have really "had it" with masculine images and pronouns. Even if we do not feel the need of inclusive language for ourselves, it seems to me important that we learn to use it for the sake of bridge-building in our ministry of reconciliation.

Please notice that I am not suggesting that we violate our understanding of Scripture in order to accommodate mainline or Roman Catholic or Jewish or secular feminism. Instead, I am suggesting that we *pay closer attention to Scriptural usage*. Even in the heavily sexist cultures through which the Bible was given to us, there was a small percentage of feminine imagery used concerning God. If that small percentage "made it" into the canonical Scriptures despite the sexism of the cultural context, then it is logical that in the different culture of the 1980's we should *expand* upon the feminine images and references of the Bible. If we

cannot bring ourselves to speak of God as female, (despite the example of Jesus who occasionally did so), at least we can avoid masculine pronouns and images for God.

It is not necessary to refer to God as masculine. (Look over what I have written, for example.) Indeed in 1980 it is painfully alienating to many of our sisters and brothers for us to continue to do so. Furthermore, because of the suppression of female ministry on the assumption that God is male, it is downright misleading for us to continue to refer to God exclusively as "he." I realize that what I am proposing sounds to some of you like a very thorough change indeed. I hope you will consider it, and urge your home churches to implement it, for the sake of justice and reconciliation.

Reconciliation Within

Finally, I propose that our ministry of reconciliation is not only to witness to mutuality on the world scale as well as in the church and home, not only to live in mutuality with those we don't approve of, not only to build bridges toward folks outside of the evangelical tradition, but also to become reconciled with our own deepest selves. In II Corinthians, Paul is addressing God's people, and yet he writes, "in Christ's name, we implore you, be reconciled to God!" So apparently it is possible to be God's people and yet unreconciled to God in the deepest flow of our Being and Becoming.

There is a long slow process of learning to think and act according to the standards of the New Creation. While I deplore the militaristic, exploitative, or judgmental stance of some Christians, I myself have plenty of learning to do. I cannot in honesty say with Paul that "worldly standards have ceased to count in my estimate of any person." Can you? Alas, I still find in myself vestiges of the Old Order's standards of sexism, racism, intellectual elitism, and economic elitism. I still sometimes backslide into judging others and myself on standards of accomplishment or attractiveness rather than on the standard of manifesting the traits of the New Creation. Please forgive me

for this. Please be patient.

At the same time, I can bear witness to this: that my attempts to build bridges of reconciliation to others have rewarded me by enlarging my capacity to love myself, forgive myself, and be reconciled to the *real me* as opposed to the superficial social construct. The more I have had the courage and opportunity to present to others God's gracious and unconditional love, the more I have been aware that I am graciously and unconditionally loved, at-one with God in the roots of my being.

Several centuries ago, Pascal described a wager in which he chose to gamble that God does exist rather than that there is no God. On the basis of II Corinthians 5 and many other Scriptures, I choose to gamble on the *unconditionality* of God's love and the *universality* of God's justice. Even if I'm wrong, if I've acted on the premise of an unconditional love that cannot be divided from justice, I will not have run the risk of intentionally violating the image of God in my neighbor. I hope I will be forgiven for my wrongheadedness when knowledge vanishes away and love remains. In the meantime, by giving non-judgmental love to others, I am returning love's justice also to myself.

For many years I could not really believe that God loved me. I was not able to believe in God's love for me until I saw that God loves God's own image in every person equally much. It is only justice, I realized, for God to love God's own image — and that love had to include even me, for I was made in God's image. So are all human beings. We are all invited to do ourselves the favor of working out in our own experience the fullest implications of God's unconditional justice-love. "It is as if God were appealing to you through us, in Christ's name, we implore you, be reconciled to God!"

Virginia Mollenkott is professor of English at William Patterson College in Wayne, New Jersey. At the forefront of biblical feminism, she is the author of *Women, Men and the Bible and* the *Homosexual My Neighbor?*

A WORKSHOP FOR WOMEN

The Women's Collective is planning a workshop for women, probably an evening program in mid-April (13 or 14?). Originally, there was a request for a preaching workshop. The committee, Jennifer Kerby and Kristan Burkert, wonders what kind of preaching workshop is wanted, or whether preaching really is the most desired workshop subject matter.

To help us in our planning, please check what you would be interested in attending and return to Box 88 (Kristan).

(Please prioritize if several are of interest.)

_____ Preaching for Women - focusing on practical issues, particularly organization (developing an outline from a text or theme) as well as particular issues for women as preachers, since the role models are men

_____ Option: video-tape feedback for participants

_____ Authority and Women - beginning with the authority issues in preaching and going from there

_____ Women: Bringing New Visions of Worship - women's preaching as one of many new styles and perspectives women bring to worship: new concepts of proclamation

_____ Power Dynamics Between Women and Men

_____ Our Lifestyles as Ministers

_____ Single Women

_____ Married Women

_____ Lesbians

_____ Mothers

_____ Your idea: _____

(Do you have any recommendations for resource women for these workshops? Honorariums and travel expenses are available. Name which workshop, please!)

Return to Box 88 this week (by March 2).

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Pagano

FOR THE RECORD

The Council Committee is planning a meeting for women on evening November 15 at 7:30 PM. The Committee is planning for a discussion of the Committee's findings and plans for women's work. The meeting is being held at the home of the Council Secretary, Mrs. J. H. Smith, 1234 Main St., New York, N.Y. 10001. The meeting is free and open to all women interested in the work of the Council.

Please indicate if several are of interest.

Presiding: Mrs. J. H. Smith - discussion of special issues, particularly the Committee's findings and plans for women's work. (The meeting is being held at the home of the Council Secretary, Mrs. J. H. Smith, 1234 Main St., New York, N.Y. 10001.)

Other: Mrs. J. H. Smith - discussion of special issues, particularly the Committee's findings and plans for women's work.

Authority and Name - discussion of special issues, particularly the Committee's findings and plans for women's work.

Topic: Discussion of special issues, particularly the Committee's findings and plans for women's work. (The meeting is being held at the home of the Council Secretary, Mrs. J. H. Smith, 1234 Main St., New York, N.Y. 10001.)

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The following are the names of the women who have been selected to represent the Council at the meeting. (The meeting is being held at the home of the Council Secretary, Mrs. J. H. Smith, 1234 Main St., New York, N.Y. 10001.)

Return to Mrs. J. H. Smith, 1234 Main St., New York, N.Y. 10001.

CHANT, CHANT, PRAISE
CHANT, CHANT, AMEN, GOD, CHANT,
CHANT, AMEN, HALLELUJAH,
CHANT, CHANT,



CULT OF THE MONTH
THE
LOCAL
CHURCH

A NEW CHURCH?

Among today's new schisms and isms of psuedo-christianity comes the Witness Lee's Local Church gang.

Eyes aglow with a strange unsettling light, the Local Church members each repeat the same tape recorder-like story. "Oh, one day I got saved, ho-hum, but **then** I found the Church!"

Sincere and zealous, they urge others to come and see the fulness of Jesus in their church, the **only** proper church in the city, by the way.

With the Local Church being active in larger cities across the country, we have felt a responsibility to warn younger and new Christians about the dangers of this counterfeit Christian body ministry.

"Local Church" teachings go astray on many major points, placing them in the class of cults or false prophets. A cult is a group of people who teach Biblical error and erroneous personal revelations claiming to have the truth.

Three general ways to recognize a cult are:

1. Deviation from one or more major Christian foundations such as the trinity, divinity of Jesus, the bodily resurrection, second coming, authority of the Bible, salvation through Jesus.

2. Personal revelations from the group's leaders are considered equal to or superceding the Bible.

3. The basic cultist belief that "we are the only ones. We are the only right-on Christians, so we are the only ones right with God and if you don't join our group you're sunk."

Cults commonly twist scriptures and take them out of context to support their uniqueness.

"One Church, One City"

The Local Church is founded on the teachings of Witness Lee. Quotations throughout this article are taken from Witness Lee's book, **The Practical Expression of the Church**.

The Local Church teaches that scripturally there should only be one church in one city. "One city should only have one church, one local church." (pg. 26) They teach that the Local Church is God's eternal purpose. "We are chosen, redeemed, saved and regenerated not for heaven, but for the church. The church is God's goal."



The Existing Church

Witness Lee, their leader and founder, believes that the true church has been lost since the first century and they are now the manifestations of the true and proper church for today.

"The Lord's recovery is mainly twofold: the spirit and the local expression of the church. We must have these two sides. . . the aspect of the spirit is for life, and the aspect of the local church is for the way." (pg. 32)

God's "Church" of the Day

Witness Lee holds that they are the proper expression of the Body of Christ today.

He totally disagrees with all previous established Christian ministries and churches. Everyone else is for division and Babylon, his group is the only rightful church.

"Until there is a local church in your locality, you can never have the proper expression of the Body." (pg. 32)

"Do not try to be neutral. Do not try to reconcile the denominations with the local church. You can never reconcile them." (pg. 92)

The Local Church group also believes that they are the only ones who are right with God and everyone else is wrong.

Witness Lee states:

"We need to have our eyes opened for if we have not seen the local church, we are in darkness, and under a blindfold." (pg. 31)

"If we drop it (the revelation of the local church) then we simply have no way to go on as a Christian. The only way to follow the Lord absolutely is to go the way of the local church." (pg. 94)

Defining Biblical Church: not select believers

The foolishness of such exclusive statements are easily exposed in the light of God's Word.

The word **church** in the Greek means an assembly. Church is used three different ways in the Bible.

First the **church** is the body of Christ. The body of Christ is composed of all people living and dead who have repented and accepted Jesus Christ as Savior.

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1 Cor. 12:27 RSV)

"So we though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." (Romans 12:5 RSV)

Secondly the word **church** is used to describe all the believers in a certain area such as all the believers in Chicago could be referred to as the **church** at Chicago. This includes all believers, not a select few who belong to a special organization.

An example of this usage is found in 1 Cor. 1:2, "To the **church** of God which is at Corinth to those sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. . . (RSV)

Thirdly, the **church** can also refer to any small or large group of believers such as a fellowship or prayer group gathered together in Christ's name.

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20 RSV)

The Bible teaches that in any given city or town there already is the church. This church is composed of every believer in that city. The true church has been in existence nearly 2,000 years, not since some man came up with some new teachings.

Nowhere in the Word does God say that believers in one city must worship together in one place. Neither can salvation depend on anything but Jesus. Membership in some organization does not make you right with God.

Only an extremely proud and arrogant person could have stated that all Christians who have ever lived and who have not been members of his little cult were in "darkness".

The foundations of Witness Lee's cult are based on semantics and misapplications of Biblical terms. Over and over the phrase "one city, one church" is heard. Does he actually mean all Christians meeting in one place? No, for on page 180 he states his goal of 100 meeting places for the Local Church in Los Angeles.

He entices sincere Christians into his following by stressing his "truth" of one place for all believers in one city to worship. What he is saying in reality is all Christians must join "my" group or groups in any given city. Witness Lee is not interested in unifying the body of Christ, but in building up his own organization.

The Church is Jesus?

Witness Lee has the audacity to say that The Church, **his** church is Jesus.

"Therefore the church must be Christ. When we say that the local church is the house of God, we must realize that this house must be Christ." (pg. 20)

The Bible teaches that all true Christians are the house or temple of God.

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16 NASB)

Each believer is a temple of God. Jesus is not the house of God, Jesus **is** God! "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." (John 1:1 RSV)

We the believers are where God resides through the Spirit when we accept Jesus as our Savior.

Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23 NASB)

Confusion on the Trinity

The Local Church also has warped views on the Trinity and the Second Coming of Jesus. Witness Lee stated, "Even the three persons of the Godhead are for the divine purpose of having a church to fulfill God's eternal plan." (pg. 8)

"Everything is for the church and everything is because of the church." (pg. 9)

"God, creation, and man are all for the church." (pg. 10)

Keep in mind that when Lee says church, he means his organization, the "Local Church". This is a most egotistical statement since in essence he is saying the only reason for both God and mankind is for **his**

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own little group.

The Word of God says:

"The Lord hath made all things for himself." (Pr. 16:4 KJV)

"Even everyone that is called by my name: for I have created him (man) for my glory." (Is. 43:7 KJV)

Witness Lee implies heavily that no longer is God a threesome but a foursome. What's added? The Local Church.

"This is the oneness of the church. It is nothing but the Triune God realized in the Spirit. Thus, the oneness of the church is the unity of the Spirit.

The Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is now in the Body. They are now four in one: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body." (pg. 43)

In 1 John 5:7 the Bible says, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (KJV) Nowhere is the church mentioned as being one with the Triune God. The church as the Body is simply all believers in Jesus Christ. The church is not some mystical missing fourth part to the Trinity.

The Second Coming Teaching

Witness Lee also teaches that the "Local Church" is necessary for the Lord's return.

"If the Lord were to come back today, there would be no ground on which He could stand in the earth. But if a small number of the Lord's people were to be prepared... and built up as a local expression here and there, the Lord would have the ground He needs." (pg. 186)

Again on page 186 he refers to the "Local Church" as a "small number of seeking ones or the overcomers," and that "their standing will be sufficient to bring the Lord back."

Witness Lee also believes that only this small seeking group of overcomers who have raised up the Local Church will be raptured with Jesus when He comes.

None of these teachings can be substantiated in the Word.

Jesus himself said, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8 RSV) So, Biblically speaking, faith is not necessary for the Lord's coming.

Nowhere in the Word can you find scripture saying Jesus can't return until there is a local church. In fact, Jesus himself is not in control of the day nor the hour; only the Father has this information.

"But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32 RSV)

As to answer Lee's doctrine on only a select few being raptured, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 makes it clear that all believers dead and alive shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 makes it clear that God has not destined His children for wrath (the Great Tribulation) but whether we be awake or asleep we will go to live with Him.

Another unscriptural teaching is the Local Church's pray-reading.

Witness Lee says about pray-reading, "The best way to have our spirits released is to pray-read the

Word. This is because pray-reading the Word exercises our spirit and does not give us time to use our mind." (pg. 144)

Pray-Reading: The Best Way?

Pray-reading is quickly read short phrases of the Bible using a different phrase each time accompanied with amen, hallelujah, and O Lord Jesus. In accordance with the 'Local Church' practices, scriptures are divided into individual and double word groupings and rearranged in such a way as to render them meaningless.

Pray-reading is executed as a group with all voices joining in with crescendos and decrescendos.

Actually it is very much like Eastern chanting. The participants receive a high equal to that felt by Eastern religious chanters with their oms and ramas.

A Christian does not receive spiritual edification from a passive mind. Instead he opens himself up for attack by letting his spiritual armor down. (Eph. 6:10-18)

Jesus taught in Matthew 6:7, "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do;" (RSV) In Colossians 3:16 we are instructed to, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (RSV)

How to Deal with False Prophets

No matter how nice the Local Church people seem, nor how convincing their rap is, at the center of the Local Church's foundation is a man and his organization, not Jesus.

The Bible teaches that "no man can lay any other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11 KJV)

Even though many Local Church members have had a born again experience they preach another "gospel".

The Bible tells us, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of God and turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:6-8 RSV)

The Word also instructs us not to fellowship with people in false doctrine and to count them as an unbeliever.

"I appeal to you brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them." (Romans 16:17 RSV)

Believers have the responsibility of judging one another to see if they be in the faith. (1 Cor. 5:6,7,12)

JESUS PEOPLE USA — FGM

4707 N. Malden

Chicago, IL 60640

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Ecumenical Praise - Contemp. Hymns.
Agape Press
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Appendix B

Bibliography and Reading List

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~~Friday~~
Tuesday 7:30

Randy

NY
Mr. B. 468-2848

There's Something Wrong With You

Friday
Saturday
Sunday
Scene 1
Scene 2
all of it

WORKING COPY

Grady - 477-5551

a play by Sam Jolley

2

1

Handwritten:
1850
1851

There's
something
wrong
with you

Handwritten:
a very good one

(The STAGEMANAGER enters, a large sign under her arm. She leans it facedown against the railing, turns to the audience and begins:)

STAGEMANAGER: We have a modest proposal for you today. We have to say from the start that it is not a particularly fair proposal. It entails a world made of two very different kinds of people. There are fems – and there are malefems. They even look different. *Kris' cue*

(Motions fem and malefem to join her on either side. During her description, the fem flexes her muscles, making noisy, aggressive sounds.)

The fem wears clothing that is light, comfortable, well-suited to the fem's responsibilities of protecting, maintaining and *enjoying* her property. Fems run the world and they dress for it . . . On the other hand (*turning to the malefem almost with distaste*), malefems do not run the world. The vast majority of them would not want to run the world, being so clearly ill-equipped to do so. Notice the strange garb of the malefem . . .

(A man in a dress, the malefem poses coolly, changing positions like a professional model).

Particularly the large opening at the bottom. Obviously, this would hamper their running from danger so malefems, as a whole, avoid dangerous, responsible situations. But they cleverly turn this disadvantage to their advantage! The same open-ended clothing allows easy access to parts of the leg and thigh that are a particular joy to the fem. *off* Since – from earliest childhood – malefems have been made to feel their primary contribution in life is to inspire, uplift and nurture the fem, this is a system that works very well. Only one thing disrupts such a system: a healthy individual.

We have such an individual. And, naturally, being healthy, he has a hard time of it. We'll see how, throughout his troubled life, a system in which one sex is favored perpetuates itself. And we begin at the beginning: with our children, our myths and our idea of God – in the Sunday School classroom.

(STAGEMANAGER places the sign on the easel. It reads, "We Are All One in the Family of Femkind." Children and the SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER, quite a proper malefem, enter and take their places, singing with great enthusiasm:)

CHILDREN
and SST.

JOYFUL, JOYFUL, WE ADORE THEE
GOD OF GLORY, LORD OF LOVE
HEARTS UNFOLD LIKE FLOWERS BEFORE THEE
OPENING TO THE SUN ABOVE!
GOD OUR MOTHER
CHRIST OUR SISTER
ONWARD SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN
MOTHERLOVE IS REIGNING O'ER US
SISTERLOVE BINDS FEM TO FEM!

*joyful joyful
sister*

SST: Welcome girls -- and boys! That was *just wonderful!* Now, let's all read this together...

ALL: WE--ARE--ALL--ONE--IN--THE--FAM--I--LY--OF--FEMKIND

SST: Yes, that's very good. Now can anyone tell me what it means? (*Hands go up*) Jessica?

1st GIRL: (*Standing*)* It means God is our mother and Christ is our sister (*sits*).*

SST: Alright, that's a good start. But there's more, isn't there? (*Hands are waving*) Who knows what else? Debby?

2nd GIRL: (*Standing*)* It also means that if Christ is the Daughter of God and we live our lives the way Christ would, we can be daughters of God, too!

(ADAM is looking out into the audience uneasily)

SST: That's what Christ promised us, didn't she. If we treat each other with -- (*coaxing*) -- what kind of love? (*scratching of heads, noisy thinking sounds*) Come on now, *al-to-gether* --!

ALL: SIS-TER-LY LOVE!!

SST: That's right! We treat each person as if she were our very own sister. Then we truly belong to the family of Femkind.

ADAM: (*Raises hand, uncertain*) Uh, I feel . . . well, a little funny.

2nd GIRL: You look funny. (*Class titters*)

ADAM: I don't want sisterly love . . . I'm a malefem.

(Class hoots as ADAM quickly sits down*)

SST: No, now quiet down, class. That's a very -- *good, very sincere* question. Adam. But let me remind you that the Bible says, "And God created them, Fem and malefem created She them." So you see when we say "Femkind" we mean everybody. God created us both. She cares for us in just the same ways.

ADAM: But we're not the same.

(Class groans at his persistence. One or more girls may turn to him and ad lib rude remarks: "Sit on it and spin," etc.)

SST: That may well be, "We're not the same" -- but let's look back to the time our Creator (*delicately*) fashioned us. She fashioned us differently because she had some very different, very wonderful roles for us. Now who would like to read the Creation Story for us? Let's look at God's plan. . .

3rd GIRL:

(Standing, she reads from the "Bible") In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void. . . And God said, Let us make Fems in our image, after our likeness, and we'll give them *dominion* over all the earth. So God created Fem in her own image, in the image of God created she her. . . And after the MotherGod formed Fem, She created every beast and fowl and brought them all unto Fem. And whatever the fem called each, that was its name forevermore. . . And the MotherGod said, It is not good that the Fem should be alone; I will make a little helper for her. And she caused a deep sleep to come upon Fem and out of her belly She took a different creature and brought him unto her. And the Fem said, I will call him Male-fem, for out of the Fem he did come. And so it was decreed from that first day that the malefem should always come out of Fem. For in her own image did the MotherGod create Fem."

ADAM:

(Raises hand). . . uh --

SST:

Yes, Adam.

ADAM:

(Standing) Doesn't this go on to the story of the Bush of Knowledge? And how they weren't s'posed to eat of it?

SST:

Yes, Adam.

ADAM:

And how the malefem caused all the trouble because he disobeyed the MotherGod?

SST:

Yes, Adam.

ADAM:

And how it all happened because he was enticed by the Throbbing Donut Monster? *(Aside:)* Which is probably sexual symbolism.

SST:

(Alarmed) Adam!

ADAM:

(Faster) And is forever exiled from Paradise and has to suffer hard labor and involuntary swelling --

SST:

(Interrupting, upset) ADAM! We all **KNOW** the **STORY**! *(More composed)* Now, do you *have* a question?

ADAM:

Yeah. Wasn't this also written down by fems? Only fems?

SST:

(Unsure, cautious) That is probably quite correct. . .

ADAM:

Well? Don't you see any connections? . . . Don't they obviously have their own interests in mind?

(Class gasps in one, horrified breath. All glare.)

SST:

(Indignant) I don't know **WHAT** you're driving at, young malefem, but I assure you that the Bible was written by **INSPIRED** fems!

Sharon
2nd GIRL:

(Jumping to her feet) BY GOD HERSELF!

1st BOY:

with one hand RAISED. toward HEAVEN
(Jumping up close behind) FEMS INSPIRED BY GOD!! (He sneers at ADAM as if A were an embarrassment to their sex. After a moment's thought, he taunts loudly:)

WHATSA MATTER? DON'T YOU LIKE FEMS?

FREEZE

Class, teacher and, lastly, ADAM exit to brisk piano segway music: Faith Of Our Fathers.

END SCENE ONE

Faith of our fathers

4

(ADAM enters. He checks his watch, strolls, looks about nervously. A couple of young fem PUNKS enter back of theatr center aisle. They've spotted ADAM and find the lone malefem an irresistible target. They catcall as they proceed up the aisle:)

1st PUNK Hey-hey! Lookit that!
2nd PUNK Hmmmmmm, he's not bad, not too bad..
1st PUNK Come on, we only want to see what you got--
2nd PUNK Yeah, boy. Show us, baby (*etc., ad lib as they close in*)
JOCKO (*Unseen offstage*) HEY! That's MY malefem! Get off him you creeps!

(PUNKS skulk off, disappear behind central prop)

ADAM Jocko!
JOCKO (*Enters*) You're okay now, I'll darlin'. Your All-American femfriend is here and all is well. Been waiting long? (*Examines nails, not really concerned*)
ADAM Well, yes I have as a matter of fact.
JOCKO No matter darlin'. I'll make it up to you. Now let's move you and your boyish charms inside. I don't want to miss this flick. (*He maneuvers ADAM to "ticket booth," cooing at him with that tone common to chauvinists that passes for admiration but sounds like contempt:*) Ah, the way you move. Your laddie-like grace, your shapely charms, your boyish asssss-sets. WHATTER you doing?!

(ADAM is fiddling for change in his purse)

ADAM (*Innocently*) Looking for change...
JOCKO YOU don't pay, I pay. It's MY treat, remember?
ADAM That's very nice but I do have the money.
JOCKO You one of these "lib" boys? No, thanks. I pay, that's it. It's ethics with me. (*Styly:*) See I really do believe this money -- if used for the right cause -- will come back to me (*winks to audience*) -- threefold!
ADAM But that makes me feel obligated to you, Jocko.
JOCKO Hey, don't ever let feeling obligated to me *bother* you. Because, baby, you feeling obligated doesn't bother *me* a bit!

(JOCKO gives audience the "OK" sign as she steers him past the booth. They pantomime sidling down a row of seats, ADAM excusing himself innumerable times as JOCKO pushes him through. They finally reach the two seats center stage. The large pad has been turned to read NO SMOKING IN THE THEATER. Once the two are settled it is turned to read again, GENTLEMEN PLEASE REMOVE YOUR HATS)

JOCKO O girl, a triple feature! "Superstud Woman," "Superstud Woman Returns," and "Daughter of Superstud Woman." This should be super!
ADAM It's starting.

(The "movie" begins with the two behind the central prop behind them standing, holding the first banner, SUPERSTUD WOMAN and chant the "plot" in unison:)

*Seannette
Macedonia
Pose Freeze
(Flutter)*
BOTH

She's TOUGH! She's TERRIFIC! She's the BEST!

She gets into TROUBLE now and then:

BAM! BOOM! BASH! CRASH!

But she al-ways MAKES it and the BOYS

Just

LOVE

Her!

Therreeeeeeee End!

(They disappear behind the central prop. JOCKO has been reacting enthusiastically throughout the production, punching the air and soundlessly cheering)

JOCKO

Wow! Terrific! Wasn't that SUPER?!

ADAM

(Trying to smile) It was very nice.

JOCKO

I can't wait for the next one -- here it comes!

X AMK
(As before, the two stand behind ADAM and JOCKO, heralding the banner SUPERSTUD WOMAN RETURNS and chant in unison:)

BOTH

She's TOUGH! She's TERRIFIC! She's the BEST!

She gets into TROUBLE now and then:

BAM! BOOM! BASH! CRASH!

But she al-ways MAKES it -- and the BOYS

Just

LOVE

Her!

THREEEEEEEEEEEE END!

JOCKO

(Still socking the air) WOW.

Exit stage left.

ADAM

Please, I have a headache. Can we go now?

JOCKO

Hey-ey-ey! I put out two bucks for these flicks!

ADAM

I'm sorry, but if I see one more Superstud Woman I think I'll barf.

JOCKO

And the best one's coming too. Hey, unless *(inspiration)* you want to go to my place and then let *this* best one, uh - *(moves into him, making indelicate, suggestive sounds)*.

(ADAM, fed-up, wrenches himself away)

ADAM

You know -- I wish you'd stop acting like that!

JOCKO

Like what?

ADAM

Like everything, absolutely *everything* is sexual. I've been watching you -- you've undressed practically every malefem whose walked into this place.

JOCKO

Honey, you don't know how close to the truth you are . . . *(waves)* Hi, Bruce!

ADAM

I find that hard to swallow.

JOCKO

You don't have to swallow it. . . But hey, -- I'm a fem in my prime. I'm peaking, I'm peaking; enjoy it!

ADAM (Emphatic) I think you're being REPULSIVE.

(JOCKO exaggerates being taken aback)

JOCKO Well hey! You're dealing with the fra-gile fem ego here. It would hurt me very much to think you were kicking me in the ego; it's almost my most sensitive part! . . .

(JOCKO throws an arm around ADAM, letting a hand dangle close to his breast)

But, guess what, I'll forgive you. Just make it up to me. Don't give me so much help keeping my very strong femly inclinations (*squeeze squeeze*) in check, okay?

(ADAM is silent)

So let's get back to the I'm-an-interesting-person part. In hygiene class.

ADAM Yes.

JOCKO It was my physique...

(She poses, Mr. America-style)

ADAM No.

JOCKO My golden-girl locks?

(She flounces her hair)

ADAM No

JOCKO Muh brains?

ADAM No, Jocko, that wasn't it.

JOCKO Aw c'mon. I know boys like you get real turned on to brains.

ADAM Will you please stop trying to "turn me on." Nothing turns me OFF like feeling I'm your prime ribs for the evening. No, it was something else. (*Becomes serious*) You seemed vulnerable once. All the bullying and swagger were gone for a minute. I loved the vulnerability in you. . .

JOCKO ((*Not sure she's flattered*) Huh?)

ADAM Wait, you know everything a fem's supposed to be? Tough, hard, emotionally crippled?

JOCKO (*Puffed up, pleased*) Yeah!

ADAM And you know everything a malefem's supposed to be -- soft, pliable, emotionally nauseous?

JOCKO Yeah.

ADAM Well, it's a lie. I remember that time in class when we were studying menopause in the adult cocker spaniel. Do you remember that day?

JOCKO Yeah, yeah ...

ADAM And I turned to look at you and it was real obvious something about the subject got to you. You had big, fat TEARS in your eyes.

JOCKO (Upset) Did not!

ADAM Did so!

JOCKO Did not!

ADAM Did so, I SAW you!

JOCKO Yeah, well (*confessing*) it reminded me of my own cocker who was hit last summer. . .
 ADAM Ah hahh...
 JOCKO Yeah, we were real close. (*Tiny sniffle*) Run over by a Rotor-rooter truck... Twelve beautiful years together (*sighs deeply*) "down the drain"
 ADAM Awwwww....
 JOCKO So I do have this one weakness that science classes bring out of me. Very hairy amoeba do it to me, too.
 ADAM See, Jocko... I saw something beautiful in that. All the bullying was gone for a moment. I loved the *vulnerability* in you.
 JOCKO (*Embarrassed*) Naaahhh... that's for malefems!
 ADAM And I realized something else important: under the skin fems and malefems are pretty much alike.
 (JOCKO reacts with a bolt)
 Did I say something wrong?
 JOCKO I'm gonna be sick. That is really GROSS
 ADAM It's just that we really do have the same sort of feelings inside. . . Is that so terrible?
 JOCKO I have one moment of weakness -- and you're calling me *malefemly*?
 ADAM No! It's just that if you think about it --
 JOCKO Well I don't WANT to think about it! Anyway, pretty laddies shouldn't think so hard; (*cooing, touching his forehead*) it puts little lines in their foreheads.
 ADAM I still have my headache. . .
 JOCKO Just relax and you'll enjoy yourself a lot more, believe me. . .
 ADAM I can't relax! I still have a headache!
 JOCKO (*Angry*) You're not enjoying yourself! Don't you know it's a reflection on me that you're not enjoying yourself! Did you see those boys in the movie? They knew how to enjoy themselves and how!
 ADAM Yeah but they were dumb.
 JOCKO Boys are more fun that way.
 ADAM I mean they were dumb to ACT dumb just because you think dumb boys are funny!
 JOCKO Hey. You don't have much sense of humor, do you? Doesn't it flatter you, deep down? Me fem, you malefem. Girl takes boy, got it? It's natural!
 ADAM Natural? It's not even FAIR! It makes a VICTIM out of me!
 JOCKO It IS fair! I like being a fem! And I like you being the weaker sex except you aren't doing so well. Don't give me so much trouble like saying fems and malefems are alike and calling me malefemly. I don't like that kind of talk... Look, you're a malefem and you'd better start ACTING like one!
 ADAM I AM a malefem! And how I act is how this malefem acts!

(JOCKO is getting good and fed up. She considers him for a moment)

JOCKO You know, there's something wrong with you, there really is. Other boys, I take them out, show them a good time; they take me home, show *me* a good time. I don't get no theories and I don't get no complaints.

(ADAM jumps up, enraged)

ADAM Are all you fems alike?! I haven't had a date with a real HUMAN BEING in three years!!

JOCKO (*Also leaping up, grabbing his arm*) Okay, the date's over. . . I'm taking you home to show you what a REAL fem's all about.

ADAM (*breaking loose*) GET OFF ME YOU CREEP! You're about as much fun as an orangatang in heat!

JOCKO You saying I'm not *femly* enough for you?

ADAM Okay! I've had it! – For once DON'T escort me home. I'm going to make it on my own!

(ADAM storms off stage as the two PUNKS behind the central prop stand and, with JOCKO, yell after him:)

ALL: WHATSA MATTER? DON'T YOU *LIKE* FEMS?

(Piano immediately into Rachmaninoff prelude)

END SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE: THE SHRINK

All Process in, genuflect in front of Sieglinda, exit, stage Rite.

Piano is playing heavy, imposing Rachmaninoff. The SHRINK, equally imposing, enters Stage Right, climbs the high pulpit at outer stage in a dirge-like stride. She is a stiff and ^{haughty presence} ~~naughty person~~, her hair drawn back severely and her face impassive.

At the same gait, a large portrait of SEGLINDA FREUD is being born down the central aisle facing the audience, to be placed on the easel directly below the SHRINK as she reaches the pinnacle point.

Although her patient will lay himself out on the altar below, the SHRINK speaks outward to the audience, rarely even looking at him. ADAM is still offstage when the music stops.



SHRINK:

Come in. You're late.

ADAM:

(entering) Thank you. (He's nervous, hesitates.)

SHRINK:

Take a couch, any couch.

ADAM:

(Looking around, sees there's only one) Oh, thanks. I'll take this one. (He climbs onto altar, lays down. Pause. He tries to start conversation.) Oh, I guess you're wondering why I'm here...

SHRINK:

No. I'm not surprised. 83% of my patients are malefems.

ADAM:

(Nervous laugh) Oh yeah? You make it sound like we're a sick breed.

SHRINK: Is it the mandatory guilts that gnaw you? The moral responsibilities that claw at you? Does the highly evolved honor code designed so you cannot possibly uphold it get you down? Hm?

ADAM: Uh --

SHRINK: You do understand what I'm getting at, don't you?

ADAM: You mean...

SHRINK: It's not necessary to say that word.

I have to ask you this question.

(Pause.)

ADAM: Go ahead.

(Pause.)

SHRINK: And I don't mean it without an accomplice.

ADAM: All right..

SHRINK: ..How often do you ^{make}/whoopie?

(Pause.)

ADAM: You don't mean it without an accomplice?

SHRINK: No.

ADAM: Not often. Hardly ever...Not once.

SHRINK: Ah ha! I thought so! (Accusingly.) You don't like -- that sort of thing much, do you? I bet you don't like fems much, either. Eh?

ADAM: No -- I mean, it's not that! It's not that I don't like being a malefem either. It's just what I have to do to be a "real" one.

SHRINK: Very interesting. Do you often feel "unreal?"

ADAM: Yes -- No! Look! Ever since I was a kid I knew I wasn't what everyone wanted. They all wanted daughters. Everyone knows that. How real can you feel if everyone knows that? What am I good for? Breeding, that's all!

SHRINK: That's very important, you know. Do you have difficulty cultivating a sense of self-worth in breeding?

ADAM: I'm the breeder. She's the next thing to God-the-Creator. Even in Sunday School it was drilled into us that God and the first-ever human being were fems. Then this one guy comes along and ruins everything -- I mean, it makes a kid think. And we say, "God created fem in Her own image" -- just because we're all born out of fems --

SHRINK: Professionally speaking, the sooner you accept biology, the better off you'll be.

ADAM: And when I dated, I felt demeaned. Every fem thought I was her private hand towel.

SHRINK: Girls will be girls. It's a sign of their nice, healthy appetites.

ADAM: (Dejected.) I feel invalid. This society isn't about me. It's all about fems. And what I can do for fems. It gets me depressed...

(The SHRINK considers him for a few minutes)

SHRINK: You know, a lot of malefems come in here, very depressed about their station in life...On the other hand, many more are happy husbands and fathers. They find homelife a rewarding experience. They also find a great deal of comfort in their religion. Religion can often make things fall into place a little clearer. Do you find comfort in your religion?

ADAM: I don't even find God in my religion. How can I believe in a God that's a fem-firster?

(There is an icy pause.)

SHRINK: (Coldly.) I see. Well, fortunately the great fems of psychiatry have made monumental inroads into the malady you're suffering. Seglinda Freud here (indicates portrait) was the first to name it: Breast envy.

ADAM: (with great distaste) Breast envy?!

SHRINK: Yes, it's a complex network of emotional-syncretatic syntaxes, but what it breaks down to in laity lingo is -- fear of peaked things in pairs or: repressed desire for the fem's superior position in society or (sudden "jive") What we got is what you want an' we aint gonna GIVE it to yah!! (Back to her professionalism) This causes some malefems emotional trouble. Tell me -- do you have trouble relating socially to the people you consider your oppressors?

ADAM: Sure -- wouldn't you?

SHRINK: And do you relate best with other malefems who share your sense of maladjustment and unconnectedness?

ADAM: (uncertain) Yes...

SHRINK: Ah -- this brings me to a delicate issue...

ADAM: It must be sex again.

SHRINK: (Reacting to that word) Please! (Composed again) Did you, by any chance, have a domineering mother and a weak father? Or a domineering father and a weak mother? A phys. ed. teacher you liked a little too well?

ADAM: What are you getting at?

SHRINK: A senile aunt? An impotent housepet? I can trace it from any one of them...Let me ask it this way: Did you clap for Tinkert

ADAM: I don't under--

SHRINK: (Impatient) Are you QUEER, for Godsakes!

ADAM: (Angrily) You don't understand what I'm telling you!

SHRINK: Look, I'm trying to help. You must realize by now there's something seriously wrong with you.

ADAM: I don't feel like there's anything wrong with me.

SHRINK: Don't make me laugh. You positively reek of neurosis.

ADAM: I tell you, I can't really believe it. I don't ~~don't~~ feel it.

SHRINK: I'm sorry but I can't help you until you admit to yourself there's something wrong with you...Have you forgotten them already?

(SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER and JOCKO are ascending sides of the pulpit)

JOCKO: Sure, that's what I thought -- He's not a real malefem. He's not all there!

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER: And he's not living what I'd call a "good life."
It's God's plan to marry and take care of the kids.
I tried to teach him that it's God's plan.

JOCKO: He tried to make me out to be the failure. He's
the failure!

SHRINK: Don't you understand yet? You're hostile, maladjusted, psychogenetic, not to mention UN-NATURAL...

JOCKO: (agreeing) RIGHT! Unnatural! SHRINK: ...psychopathic, psychoneuro-

SST: You call yourself God-fearing? logical, physiological, para-
You pagan pervert. pathic, neurasthenic, pathoneu-
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SST: You're making a mortal mistake, not to mention: WRONG...

Adam! Admit you're wrong!

SHRINK & SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER & JOCKO: WRONG, WRONG, WRONG! WRONG!

(STAGEMANAGER breaks into the ranting and waves arms,
signalling for them all to stop...)

STAGEMANAGER: HOLD IT! Hold it! Hold it!

(The actors stop their activity and drop their roles. The play is,
at this chaotic point, suddenly ended)

I think we can agree that it can't go anywhere
from here.

I remind you that I admitted from the start that this is an unfair proposal. It divides its sexes into better and worse, richer and poorer -- whole people and half people by definition.

Its language is the enemy of half its users. Its theology is the enemy of half its people and all for the sake of the other half.

This is an inhumane society. And we reject our proposal.

But, if we reject that world, to what do we return? Do we go back to Mankind? The world of males and fe-males? Men and wo-men?

The faith of our fathers, and the brother love that binds man to man?

A tie that binds so tightly that women are outside it, left to comprise the vast majority of psychiatric caseloads?

I learned a trick in art school. When you've been drawing a long time, you naturally tend to draw at a certain angle, with a certain slant, either to the left or right and you can't see it. It's habit. So you pick it up and put it in front of a mirror. And in that reverse the imperfection is perfectly clear. It's there without the mirror -- but you really can't see it.

The thing to realize it's the same picture before your eyes everyday as it is in this mirror image. And if we reject this as categorically ludicrous and unfair, how can we do exactly the same thing in reverse and be any less unfair

You know it's written: The Lord your God is One.

That doesn't mean one god for men and one goddess for women. One is one.

One is the summation of all parts. This is the challenge, the high mark we must keep trying to meet. The Lord is ONE, all-inclusive, all-encompassing

And it's very easy ^{to} saying "God is one" and let it ride. But if our language doesn't articulate it, our systems not allow it, our faith not express it, we do not believe it. We do not understand it. We are, instead, maintaining "The Lord our God is ^{fragmented} ~~one~~ ~~half~~" and we prevent ourselves from recognizing the wider circle of God's grace.

Many of us feel MCC is called to be a whole church.

Women and men across this fellowship feel that if it's going to happen it's going to start here. Women and men are finding in this place that there is good news: We are not meant to be bound by human contrivances. We are called to leave the structures, leave the languages that separate us. Leave the social mores, leave the doctrines that stratify us. Because we are meant to be whole; we are meant to be lifted up. We are meant to transform the world to the image of our God -- just, all-encompassing, and whole.

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music - ||.|| || music ||.|| || music
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friday - scene 1
sat - scene 2

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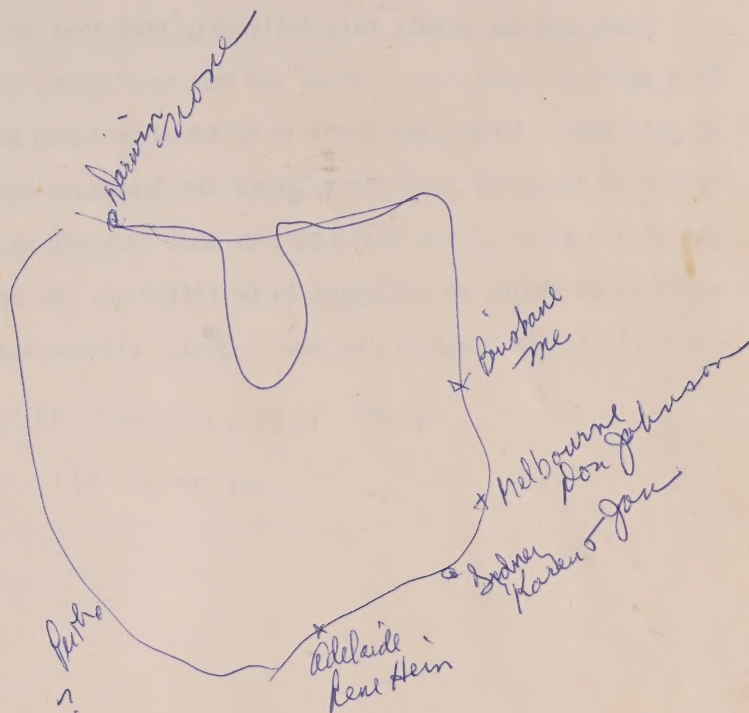
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Clipboard

Blue dress.

~~Black~~ Skirt

White blouse



SHRINK: Is it the mandatory guilts that gnaw you? The moral responsibilities that claw at you? Does the highly evolved honor code designed so you cannot possibly uphold it get you down? Hm?

ADAM: Uh --

SHRINK: You do understand what I'm getting at, don't you?

ADAM: You mean...

SHRINK: It's not necessary to say that word.

Don't say that word
Adam you mean sex?

I have to ask you this question.

(Pause.)

ADAM: Go ahead.

(Pause.)

SHRINK: And I don't mean it without an accomplice.

ADAM: All right..

SHRINK: ..How often do you ^{make}/whoopie?

(Pause.)

ADAM: You don't mean it without an accomplice?

SHRINK: No.

ADAM: Not often. Hardly ever...Not once.

SHRINK: Ah ha! I thought so! (Accusingly.) You don't like -- that sort of thing much, do you? I bet you don't like fems much, either. Eh?

ADAM: No -- I mean, it's not that! It's not that I don't like being a malefem either. It's just what I have to do to be a "real" one.

SHRINK: Very interesting. Do you often feel "unreal?"

ADAM: Yes -- No! Look! Ever since I was a kid I knew I wasn't what everyone wanted. They all wanted daughters. Everyone knows that. How real can you feel if everyone knows that? What am I good for? Breeding, that's all!

SHRINK: That's very important, you know. Do you have difficulty cultivating a sense of self-worth in breeding?

ADAM: I'm the breeder. She's the next thing to God-the-Creator. Even in Sunday School it was drilled into us that God and the first-ever human being were fems. Then this one guy comes along and ruins everything -- I mean, it makes a kid think. And we say, "God created fem in Her own image" -- just because we're all born out of fems --

SHRINK: Professionally speaking, the sooner you accept biology, the better off you'll be.

ADAM: And when I dated, I felt demeaned. Every fem thought I was her private hand towel.

SHRINK: Girls will be girls. It's a sign of their nice, healthy appetites.